

Pastor	Schakowsky	Thompson (MS)
Payne	Schiff	Tiberi
Perlmutter	Schmidt	Tierney
Peterson (MN)	Schwartz	Towns
Petri	Scott (GA)	Tsongas
Pomeroy	Scott (VA)	Turner
Porter	Serrano	Udall (CO)
Price (NC)	Sestak	Udall (NM)
Rahall	Shays	Upton
Rangel	Shea-Porter	Van Hollen
Regula	Sherman	Velázquez
Rehberg	Shimkus	Visclosky
Reichert	Shuler	Walden (OR)
Renzi	Sires	Walsh (NY)
Reyes	Skelton	Walz (MN)
Richardson	Slaughter	Wasserman
Rodriguez	Smith (NJ)	Schultz
Ros-Lehtinen	Smith (WA)	Waters
Roskam	Snyder	Watson
Ross	Solis	Watt
Rothman	Space	Waxman
Roybal-Allard	Speier	Weiner
Ruppersberger	Spratt	Welch (VT)
Ryan (OH)	Stark	Wexler
Ryan (WI)	Stupak	Whitfield (KY)
Salazar	Sutton	Wilson (OH)
Sánchez, Linda	Tanner	Woolsey
T.	Tauscher	Wu
Sanchez, Loretta	Taylor	Yarmuth
Sarbanes	Thompson (CA)	

NOT VOTING—21

Andrews	Fortuño	Rogers (AL)
Boswell	Harman	Rush
Brown, Corrine	Hulshof	Saxton
Brown-Waite,	Kilpatrick	Weller
Ginny	Levin	Wilson (NM)
Cannon	Pickering	Young (AK)
Cubin	Pitts	
Cummings	Pryce (OH)	

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN (during the vote). Two minutes remain in this vote.

□ 1012

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 6599, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Act, 2009. This legislation builds upon last year's needed increases in military construction and veterans affairs funding, and continues to make our veterans a top priority.

As a veteran, I am pleased that H.R. 6599 provides more support for our veterans. H.R. 6599 includes a total of \$47.7 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs. \$40.8 billion supports the Veterans Health Administration, VHA, and Veterans Medical Services, which expects to serve over 5.8 million patients next year. To improve access to care for our veterans, H.R. 6599 provides \$200 million for fee-based providers where VHA services are not available. The bill also raises the travel reimbursement rate from 28.5 cents per mile to 41.5 cents per mile to help thousands of rural veterans get care. A continuing backlog at the VA forces our veterans to wait far too long to receive the benefits that they have earned. This bill will enable the VA to hire 1,400 new casework processors. Our veterans are men and women who have answered the call of duty to serve our country, and we have a duty to provide them with the best possible care when they return.

This bill addresses the specific issues that we see affecting our soldiers returning today from Iraq and Afghanistan. H.R. 6599 provides a \$250 million increase to support prosthetics and new prosthetic technology, as well as \$3.8 billion for specialty mental health services and \$584 million for substance abuse programs. This is funding that can help address

the growing incidence of post traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury cases among our returning soldiers.

As the Representative of Fort Bragg, one of the largest United States Army bases in the country, I am pleased that this bill addresses the needs of our military installations. This bill includes \$24 billion for military construction, including an increase of \$300 million for replacing inadequate military housing. Fort Bragg is expanding rapidly, and there are crucial funds in this bill to meet new demands. H.R. 6599 includes over \$21 million for road construction and \$78 million for on-base school constructions, to meet the needs of the influx of people at Fort Bragg. In addition, this bill includes \$1,300,000 that I requested to construct a new mass casualty facility at Womack Army Medical Center for triage and decontamination purposes for the surrounding area. H.R. 6599 provides \$5.6 billion for new military construction and family housing, in line with the "Growing the Force" initiative to increase the size of the Army, Marine Corps and National Guard and Reserve. Finally, I am pleased that there is an increase of \$1.8 billion for the Base Realignment and Closure Act, BRAC, to continue these efforts.

I support H.R. 6599, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Act, 2009, and I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for its passage.

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to express my support for H.R. 6599, The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs FY09 Appropriations Act. Unfortunately, I was unable to vote on this bill today, however if I had been able to cast my vote I would have supported this measure. I have been a strong and consistent supporter of the military, veterans, and military families and this measure provides much needed funds to assist our brave men and women in uniform.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of this bill and our Nation's veterans. Their service and sacrifice for our country is honorable and today this body will properly honor them by ensuring greater resources for their care and wellbeing. Congress has responded appropriately by increasing funding by \$2.9 billion above the President's request.

This bill responds to the needs of our returning troops from Iraq and Afghanistan by including \$3.8 billion for mental health resources to provide treatment for post traumatic stress syndrome and traumatic brain injuries. It includes \$300 million above the President's request for maintaining VA medical facilities. Access to these facilities and ensuring their proper upkeep has a positive impact on our communities and is imperative to serving the needs of our veterans. This bill increases enrollment in VA medical care for all veterans, including those on a limited income, by 10 percent. To help veterans in rural areas that must travel to get needed health care, the mileage reimbursement has been increased from 28.5 cents to 41.5 cents.

I therefore support this bill. These improvements to our VA system will have a beneficial impact on our veterans and move our Nation in the direction of providing them with the care they need and deserve.

However, this bill includes funding for military construction projects for military operations in Afghanistan. The Bagram Air Base is the main base for the Combined Forces Air Component Command, CFACC. Funds from this bill will be used to fortify temporary build-

ings, expand refueling capability and build an aircraft maintenance hangar at Bagram. As the U.S. expands and improves military facilities in Afghanistan, the likelihood that our troops will remain in the region increases.

Including these funds, which keep our troops in harms way, in a bill meant to support our veterans is an affront to our Nation's veterans and to the level of transparency our government should maintain.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of this bill.

I'm pleased that for the second year in a row, the 110th Congress is providing the funding necessary to meet the housing requirements of our servicemembers and their families, as well as the money needed to care for our veterans.

Let me begin by thanking Chairman EDWARDS for including report language directing the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to develop a plan to care for the veterans and military retirees in my district who would need health care services if Fort Monmouth's Patterson Army Health Clinic were to close in 2011. While I continue to oppose the decision to close Fort Monmouth and will continue to look for ways to reverse it, that decision is, for now, the law of the land. Accordingly, it is necessary to plan for meeting the medical needs of the many veterans and TRICARE beneficiaries in Central New Jersey in the event Fort Monmouth's medical facilities are closed. I'm pleased that the Committee is requiring that a report on how their needs will be met be delivered to Congress no later than January 30, 2009.

Overall, this bill would provide \$40.7 billion for VA health programs, which is \$3.1 billion over the current level. In addition to continuing to focus on providing adequate funding to treat veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, and traumatic brain injury, TBI, this bill would provide \$400 million that was not requested by the President to start enrolling 10 percent of Priority 8 veterans in the VA medical system. The Priority 8 category is reserved for veterans whose injuries currently are not rated as service related and whose incomes are more than \$24,644 if single or \$29,576 for a veteran with a dependent. An estimated one half of all uninsured veterans are Priority 8, and Priority 8 veterans have not been enrolled since 2003 as part of an Administration effort to cut costs.

The bill also includes \$200 million, which was not requested by the President, to improve access to care where Veterans Health Administration, VHA, services are not available. I am hopeful that this will assist both rural veterans seeking care and those living in urban or ex-urban communities that currently lack ready access to a VA community-based outpatient clinic.

The bill would provide \$1.6 billion, \$250 million more than last year, to provide veterans with more technologically advanced prostheses. The VA has a long and generally commendable track record in this area. However, I am pleased the committee recognizes the need for the VA to apply a greater emphasis on harnessing the latest technological breakthroughs to help give our wounded veterans the maximum possible personal mobility.

I am also grateful to the committee for providing \$165 million for grants to States for the construction and renovation of extended care facilities. The President's proposed \$80 million